

# RHODE ISLAND <sup>151</sup> HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS

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Vol. XIX

January 1, 1926

No. 1

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This sign formerly hung at the tavern at the corner of the Greenwich Mail Road and the Rocky Point Road.

*Given to the Society by Mrs. Israel R. Sheldon.*

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Issued Quarterly

## CONTENTS

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	PAGE
Lafayette's Visits to Rhode Island, by Howard W. Preston . . . . .	1
The Removal of the County Seat from Tower Hill to Little Rest, 1752, by William Davis Miller . . . . .	11
Othniel Gorton's Two Wives, by Henry A. Burlingame . . . . .	16
The Block Island Double Ender, by George R. Burgess . . . . .	16
Notes . . . . .	18
Rhode Island Signboards, by Howard M. Chapin .	21

RHODE  
HISTORICAL



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HOWARD W. PRESTON, *President* GILBERT A. HARRINGTON, *Treasurer*  
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The Society assumes no responsibility for the statements or the opinions of contributors.

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### Lafayette's Visits to Rhode Island

BY HOWARD W. PRESTON.

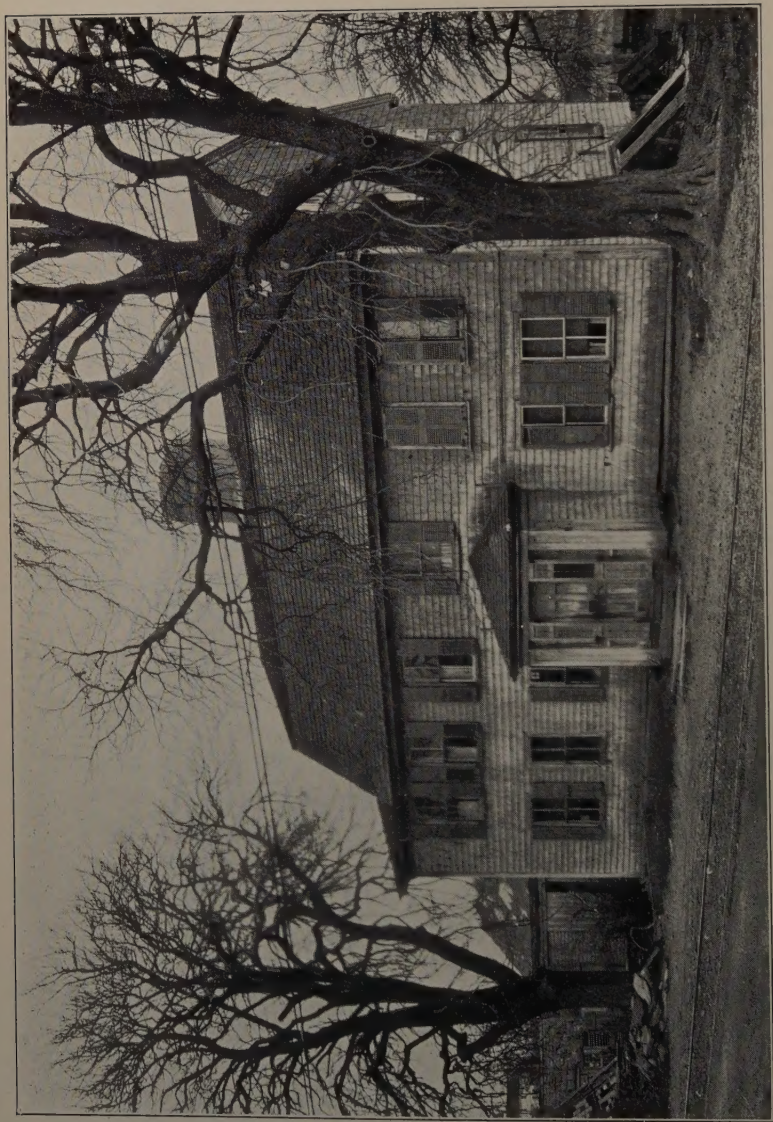
General Lafayette made four visits to Rhode Island during the Revolutionary War: the first in the summer of 1778, when he brought a detachment of troops from Washington to assist General Sullivan in the movement which culminated in the battle of Rhode Island, and the second in 1781, when as the representative of Washington he came to confer with Rochambeau at Newport. After the war was over, he visited Rhode Island on both of the tours in America in 1784 and in 1824.

Several houses claim the honor of his presence on these different visits. The claims of a few can be substantiated by documentary evidence, but the greater number are vouched for only by local tradition.

#### FIRST VISIT.

When in 1778 the French fleet under the Comte d'Estaing was unable to enter the harbor of New York and attack General Howe, it was decided, with the co-operation of an American





The Dennis House, Lafayette's Headquarters, Portsmouth

detachment under General Sullivan, to drive the British from Newport. On July 22, 1778, Washington at White Plains wrote to Lafayette: "Sir, You are to have the immediate command of that detachment from this army which consists of Glover's and Varnum's brigades and the detachment under the command of Colonel Henry Jackson. You are to march them by the best routes to Providence in the State of Rhode Island. When there, you are to subject yourself to the orders of Major General Sullivan, who will have command of the expedition against Newport and the British and other troops on the islands adjacent."

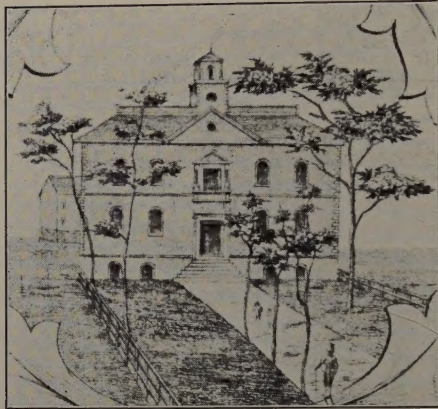
Lafayette was at Stamford on the 24th, at Saybrook the 28th, at Norwich the 30th, and reached Providence with his 2,000 men on August 4th.

The usual route from Connecticut during this period was by the Plainfield road passing through South Scituate, but sometimes soon after entering Rhode Island the southern road leading through Coventry and Kent was chosen. This led by Angell's Tavern, where Rochambeau's troops encamped on their marches both to and from Yorktown. The mantel in the southwest room of this house still bears a scar said to have been made by Lafayette with his sword when asked to leave a memento of his presence. Farther west on the eastern side of the road is a spring still known as Lafayette's spring.

Lafayette visited d'Estaing on his flag ship, the Languedoc, August 4th, returning to Providence the same evening. He moved with the troops to Tiverton on August 6th. A two story hip-roofed wooden house on the east side of the main road to Little Compton, below Narragansett, is pointed out as Lafayette's headquarters. He is said to have occupied the northwest chamber on the second floor, but whether before or after the battle of Rhode Island tradition does not say.

General Sullivan crossed with the troops Sunday, August 9th, from Tiverton to the Island of Rhode Island. The headquarters of General Lafayette were, according to tradition, in a two story gambrel roof wooden house on the east side of the village street of Newtown. The house was formerly the home of George N. Dennis (Beers Atlas, 1870, p. 107, J. G. Dennis and





Old State House, Providence  
Before Enlargement



Lafayette's Headquarters, Tiverton

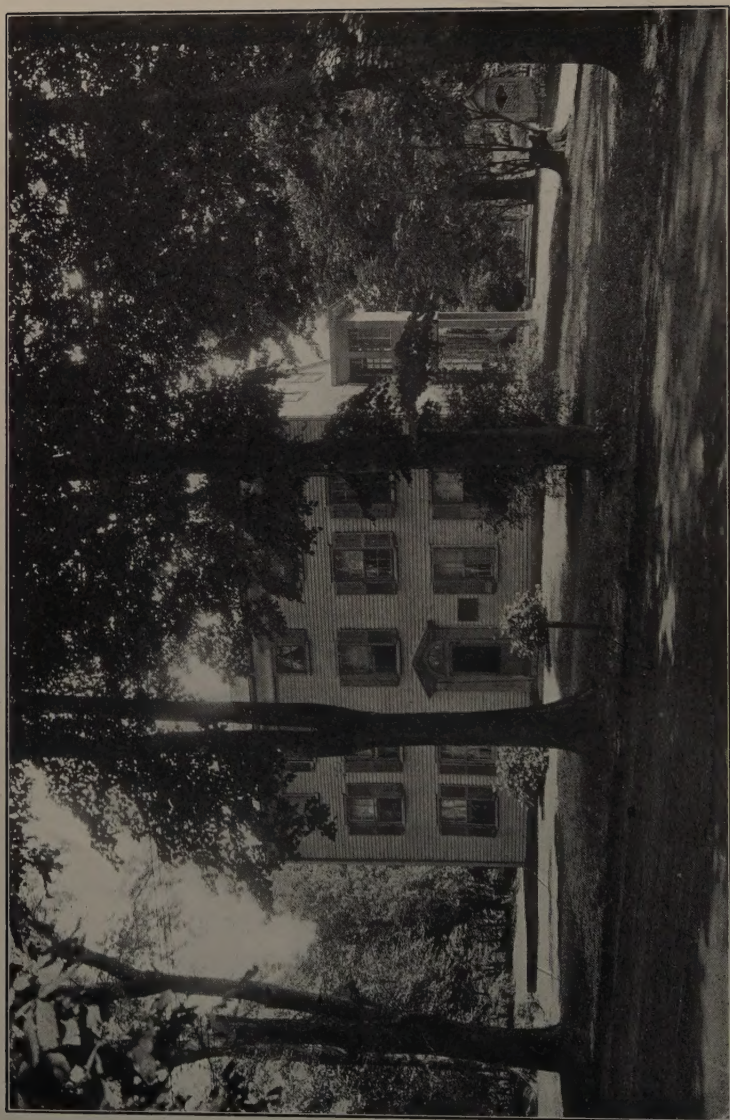
G. N. Dennis). The southeast room on the second floor is pointed out as the Lafayette room. Another house in Portsmouth, near Bristol Ferry, formerly owned by Dennis Hall, is mentioned as used by Lafayette as headquarters (Bayles' History of Newport County, p. 665). In Field's Rhode Island is shown (I:51) a cut marked: "Hall House near Bristol Ferry Portsmouth. During the battle of Rhode Island this house was used as a hospital by the Continental forces."

The same day that General Sullivan crossed to the island, a British fleet appeared off the harbor, and the next day d'Estaing sailed out to meet them. Ten days later the French fleet shattered by a gale returned, but only to sail away to Boston, August 21st, to refit. Though deprived of the aid of the French, from which so much had been expected, Sullivan besieged the British in Newport, but was forced to retire. Convinced that unless aid could be obtained from d'Estaing the campaign must fail, Lafayette, August 28th, rode the seventy miles to Boston in seven hours, arriving just as the French fleet entered the harbor. The journey was fruitless, and Lafayette, returning on August 30th in six and a half hours, found the battle of Rhode Island over and the American forces retreating. He was in time to take command of the rear guard and bring it across to Tiverton. Here he may have occupied the house mentioned above.

On September 1st, according to Colonel Israel Angell's diary, General Varnum's brigade in General Lafayette's detachment passed by boat to Kickemuit bridge and thence via Warren to Bristol, where it encamped on Bradford's hill. Lafayette made his headquarters at the house of Joseph Reynolds, now known as the Reynolds House, at the north end of Bristol on the east side of the road. This dignified three story wooden mansion still stands bearing a bronze tablet: "This house built about the year 1698 by Joseph Reynolds was occupied by Lafayette as his headquarters September 1778 during the War of American Independence."

The story is often told with picturesque detail of how Mrs. Reynolds, eagerly expecting her distinguished guest, was surprised by the arrival of a plain appearing young man, whom she





The Reynolds House, Lafayette's Headquarters, Bristol



judged to be one of the general's retainers, but who calmly made havoc with the dinner provided for the Marquis, and then, to her further confusion, proved to be the Marquis himself.

Lafayette's room was the northwest chamber, where the four poster in which he slept is still preserved. The southwest room on the first floor was his dining room and office. His stay here was brief, for on September 18th the brigade marched to Warren and encamped on Windmill Hill, where traces of their occupation could but recently be seen. In Warren, Lafayette quartered at Coles tavern, since burned.

Lafayette wrote from Warren, September 24th, to Washington, but on September 28th he was in Boston, whence having obtained leave he proceeded on October 1st to Philadelphia.

#### SECOND VISIT.

In the summer of 1780, on the arrival of Rochambeau, Washington sent Lafayette, then at headquarters in Bergen County, New Jersey, to carry his greetings to the French Commander, writing Rochambeau July 22nd: "I have requested him (Lafayette) to go himself to New London where he will probably meet you." Lafayette set out immediately, and his movements can be traced by his letters to Washington. He was at Peekskill July 20th, at Danbury the 21st, at Hartford the 22nd, at Lebanon the 23rd, arriving on the 25th at Newport, where he remained with Rochambeau as late as July 31st, for on that date he wrote to Washington. On August 7th, however, he was at Peekskill again in command of his corps.

#### THIRD VISIT.

Lafayette arrived in Providence, October, 1784, on his first visit to America after the close of the Revolutionary War. This was his third visit to Rhode Island.

The occurrence is thus described in the *Providence Gazette* of October 30, 1784:

"Last Saturday Afternoon (October 23) the Honorable Marquis de la Fayette arrived here from Boston. He was met a few miles from hence by a Number of the principal Inhabitants, and received at the Entrance of the Town and escorted in, by the United Company of the Train of Artillery under arms. On his

Arrival he was welcomed by a Discharge of 13 Cannon at the State House Parade, the Bells were rung and at Sunset, the Salute was repeated by 13 heavy Cannon on Beacon Hill."

"The Marquis having visited Newport returned from thence on Monday Evening and on Tuesday partook of an Entertainment at Mr. Rices Tavern at which were present his Excellency the Governor, his Honor the Deputy-Governor, both Houses of Assembly, a Number of respectable Inhabitants, Officers of the late Army &c. After Dinner the Marquis set out for Boston and was again saluted with 13 Cannon."

"On Monday last (October 25) the Society of the Cincinnati of this State convened at Mr. Rices Tavern where an elegant Dinner was provided upon the Occasion; and having finished the Business of their Meeting they were honored with Company of his Excellency the Governor his Honor the Lieutenant Governor and the Honorable the Marquis de la Fayette accompanied by the Chevalier De L'Enfant." Thirteen toasts were given.

Mr. Rice's tavern was the Golden Ball Inn, on Benefit Street, later the Globe, and later still long known as the Mansion House and still standing.

#### LAST VISIT.

Lafayette, the invited guest of the American government, made his last visit to Providence, August 23, 1824. The Committee of arrangements, William Blodgett, Moses B. Ives and Richard J. Arnold, issued a broadside giving the order of the procession and the details of the reception.

"The procession will form at the line of the town where the General may enter, move through High-Street, down Westminster-Street to Weybosset Bridge, up North Main-Street, to the State House."

After being received by the Governor in the Senate Chamber, the committee were to conduct him to Horton's Hotel. The Marine Artillery under Colonel Steward were to be stationed at the Dexter Training Grounds to fire a salute when the General reached the line of the town, and the United Train of Artillery under Colonel Hodges on Prospect Hill to fire a salute when Lafayette reached the State House.



The *Providence Gazette* of August 25, 1824, contains a long rhetorical account of this visit. A committee and messengers were dispatched by different roads to insure meeting the General. He was met at Fisk's tavern in Scituate, Monday morning, and escorted to "the line of the town," where at 2 P. M. he was received by the Town Council. Then in an open barouche drawn by four white horses he followed the appointed line of march, "welcomed by that most expressive token of affectionate interest, the waving of white handkerchiefs by the fair hands of the ladies."

"On arriving in front of the State-House, the General alighted and was received in a peculiarly interesting manner. The poplar avenue leading to the building was lined on each side with nearly two hundred misses, arrayed in white, holding in their hands branches of flowers which (as the General proceeded up the avenue supported by the Governors Aids) they strewed in his path at the same time waving their white handkerchiefs. The General was afterwards pleased to express the peculiar and high satisfaction he took in this simple and touching arrangement."

The old State-House, as Lafayette saw it, presented a straight front with simple steps. The projecting tower and entrance with long flight of steps were built in 1850-51, when the building was enlarged by the addition of the Benefit Street portion.

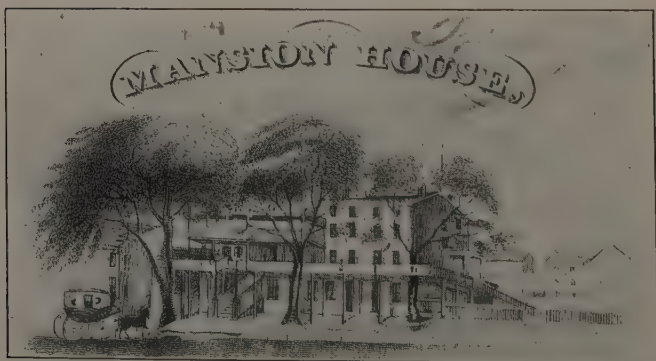
At the landing of the stairs occurred the affecting meeting with Colonel Stephen Olney. In the Senate Chamber the General was received by the State and Town officials.

"He then proceeded on foot to the accommodations provided for him and after entering the Hotel appeared on the piazza and was greeted in the warmest manner." Later the company "repaired to the dining room where an elegant entertainment was provided in Mr. Horton's best style and where during the repast the finest recollections in the history of American Independence gave a zest to the social pleasures of the board. At about half past four the troops (at the particular request of General Lafayette who expressed his admiration of their discipline and fine military appearance) were drawn up for review in a line extend-

ing on Benefit-street towards Pawtucket. The General then proceeded on foot and was greeted on entering the street with the same joyous acclamations. Supported by the arm of the Governor he walked in front of the line of troops stopping to shake hands with all the principal officers. On arriving at the extreme wing he halted and his carriage was drawn up for his reception, which he entered accompanied by his Excellency, Colonel Brown, and Zachariah Allen Esq. and amid the cheers of the people left the town."

Sanford Horton was the proprietor of the Globe Tavern at 81 Benefit Street, the house at which Henry Rice, as the host of the Golden Ball, entertained Lafayette on his visit to Providence in 1784.

Several houses in Providence are often connected with the name of Lafayette, as the Fenner Garrison House at Thornton, the gambrel roof brick house, 537 and 539 North Main Street, and "the house of William Field of Fields Point" (Stone's French Allies, p. 30-31). Some claim his presence at the so-called Pidge Tavern.



Golden Ball or Globe Tavern, later called the Mansion House,  
Benefit Street, Providence.



## The Removal of the County Seat from Tower Hill to Little Rest, 1752

WILLIAM DAVIS MILLER

In the year 1687 the General Assembly of the Colony ordered that a court house be erected in the Town of Kingstown,<sup>1</sup> but it would appear that this act was never consummated and that the matter was left in abeyance until the session of February 1729/30<sup>2</sup> when it was further, and more specially, enacted, "that the County Court House and Jail for the King's County, be set upon the hill, near Robert Cases's dwelling house in South Kingstown."<sup>3</sup> This court house, built by Rowse Helme,<sup>4</sup> was completed about 1732 and the Assembly sat there for the first time in the month of October of the following year.<sup>5</sup> This building, together with the jail, which was probably built about the same time, was situated on the north side of the country road leading from the Post Road on Tower Hill westward to the Great Swamp, and was near the center of the village that later became known as Tower Hill,<sup>6</sup> which was an outgrowth of the

<sup>1</sup>Records of the Colony of Rhode Island, Bartlett. Vol. III, pp. 235-237.

<sup>2</sup>Idem Vol. p. 432.

<sup>3</sup>"Robert Cases's dwelling house" was situated on the southerly side of the road leading down the east slope of Tower Hill from the Post Road to the Pettaquamscutt River. The spot was a few rods to the eastward from where the old Congregational grave yard still lies. The house itself appears on a road plat dated 1727.

<sup>4</sup>Rowse Helme was the third generation of the name in the County. He presented a bill to the Assembly for £791 2s 3d for the building of the Court House. (Records of the Colony of Rhode Island. Vol. IV, p. 472.)

<sup>5</sup>Records of the Colony of Rhode Island. Vol. IV, p. 488.

<sup>6</sup>Prior to about the year 1740 the name "Tower Hill" has not been found in any deed, record or other document; but the hill, when especially referred to, was designated as in the text or as near the land of some person. In 1739, due to the outbreak of war between England and Spain, the Assembly enacted that watch towers were to be built at several strategical points on the Colony's coast. One was ordered built on Point Judith, but careful examination has failed to reveal the fact that it was constructed there. It would seem possible that a watch tower may have been built at this time on what is now Tower Hill, although there is no evidence to substantiate the fact save from the commanding position of the hill and from the proven fact that shortly after this date (1739) the hill becomes known as "Tower Hill." Dr. MacSparran so names it in his Diary under the date of 1743.

first settlement made in the Pettaquamscutt Purchase. In 1729 it was a community of considerable size, and situated as it was on the ancient Pequot Path or Post Road and accessible by ferry from the islands of Rhode Island and Conanicut, its position was one of importance in the County.

In the early days of the Pettaquamscutt Purchase<sup>7</sup> the Purchasers had laid out a large tract of land lying about two miles to the Westward of Tower Hill, which land they divided into farms of considerable acreage,<sup>8</sup> allotting a portion to themselves and the remainder to others. This tract was on a ridge, known later as Little Rest Hill, and on its adjacent slopes. It was natural, therefore, that, as these farms became occupied and built upon, there should grow up a small settlement in their center. This settlement, on the crest of the ridge, soon became the village of Little Rest,<sup>9</sup> now Kingston. The first house lots and small holdings,<sup>10</sup> on what is now the main street of the village, were taken up about 1700, and from that date the growth of the community would appear to have been comparatively rapid and that within two score of years was of such size as to challenge its neighbor to the eastward.

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<sup>7</sup>The Pettaquamscutt Purchase, a tract of approximately twelve miles square, was made in 1658. The first settlement was on the East slope of Tower Hill and there are records of house lots being allotted as early as 1663. Here Jireth Bull had his stone house. There is repeated evidence that this settlement was called "Pettaquamscutt" distinguishable from the Purchase as a whole.

<sup>8</sup>North of what is now the main street of the village were the farms of Mumford, Hull, Sewel, Porter, Willson, Wilbor, and Brenton. On the south were those of Bull, Knowles, Teft and Helme. These farms were allotted and occupied by their owners or tenants prior to 1700.

<sup>9</sup>It is certain that all proof of the origin of this name is lost. The theory that it was so named because the troops of the United Colonies rested there in 1675 on their way to the Great Swamp may well have foundation provided it is agreed that their route of march crossed the hill. However, as most of the travel at a later period crossed the hill on the way to the westward and because of the steepness of the roads approaching it, it is conceivable that man and beast did halt for a "little rest" upon reaching the crest.

<sup>10</sup>The first record found of a small holding on the main street of the village was that of Abraham Perkins who purchased two acres of land from John Moore in 1714, where he built. This land was situated on the south east corner of the four corners and opposite to what is now the Tavern Hall Club.



In 1752, the inhabitants of Tower Hill having, for some inexplicable reason, allowed the Court House and Jail to fall into a bad state of repair, the village of Little Rest was not slow in grasping the opportunity of attempting to wrest from Tower Hill their enviable position as the County Seat. To gain this end, Little Rest, or at least a considerable number of its residents, presented a petition<sup>11</sup> to the General Assembly pointing out that Little Rest was now a large village "surrounded with all the conveniences of Life of all sorts," and that there were soon to be built "Three good Taverns"<sup>12</sup> for the entertainment of those attending the Courts. The ruinous and decayed condition of the existing court house also gave an excellent point of argument, and with reference to this, grave concern was expressed that the members of the General Assembly "should so endanger your Lives as to set in it this time of Year when a hard storm would almost Blow it down." This concern expressed for the well being of the members, was later somewhat tempered by a long recital of the hardships which the residents of Little Rest experienced in attending the courts and Assembly at Tower Hill.

The petition was addressed to the "Hon<sup>ble</sup> General Assembly to set at South Kings Town . . . . the last Tuesday of Feb. 1752" and together with the excerpts quoted in the preceding paragraph, set forth: "that we a Long time have taken notice of & Laboured under ye many Inconviencies that attend y<sup>e</sup> Scituation of y<sup>e</sup> Court House on Tower Hill being in a Very remote Corner of the County that ye said House and Jail are out of repair that it will take a great deal of money to put them in tollerable repair but can never be made good for they were but Miserably built at first . . . . & that there is no Likelyhood of any end to the charge & Expençe thereof except by pulling them down

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<sup>11</sup>A copy of this petition found among the papers of the late Elisha R. Potter bears the signatures of Thomas Lillibridge, Thomas Rogers, John Kenyon, Joseph Reynolds, Zackeras (?) Pooler and Richmond Reynolds.

<sup>12</sup>The three taverns which were to be built were probably those later owned or managed by Charles Barker, Timothy Peckham and John Potter. The Barker house is now the Kingston Inn; Peckham's stood off the road and east of the rear of the old Court House which still stands; and Potter's was probably situated where the Tavern Hall Club now stands.

. . . . your petitioners having also been informed y<sup>t</sup> Aplication has been made . . . . for money to repair said Court House & Jail which as we are members of this Colony prey may not be granted as we are sensible whatsoever sums of money are laid out on it will be only thrown away . . . .”

The petitioners, after this recital of the perilous condition of the court house and its danger to the lives of the Assembly, proceed, in terms hardly to the credit of Tower Hill, to contrast the comforts of the two villages. According to their statement we find that the “Members of the General Assembly & the Courts of Justice and all other attending on them” suffer great inconveniences especially “when they set in ye winter season for want of proper accomodations & Suitable places Enough to be comfortably entertained wood<sup>13</sup> and all other Necessaryes of Life being Scarce & difficulty obtain at Tower Hill.” Whereas at Little Rest, beside the three taverns already mentioned, attention is drawn to “many Handsome estates & and good settlers at & near s<sup>d</sup> Little Rest hill who will at all times entertain & accomodate glad the Members of the Assembly & Courts & many others attending at their own Houses & private expense . . . .” Also attention is drawn to the central situation of Little Rest Hill to all parts of the county.

If, continue the petitioners, the Assembly will move the site of the County Seat to Little Rest, Col. Elisha Reynolds<sup>14</sup> will deed a parcel of land for the Court House and “Mr. Robert Potter<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>It would appear that this is an exaggeration, as there is now plenty of woodland near Tower Hill, despite the fact that much of the woodland in this section is of comparatively recent growth.

<sup>14</sup>Col. Elisha Reynolds, son of Henry and Sarah (Greene) Reynolds, was born in 1706. He married Susanna Potter. Reynolds acquired the land by purchase from Henry Knowles, grand son of the Henry Knowles who acquired the land from the Pettaquamscutt Purchasers prior to 1670. The greater portion of this property is now in the possession of Col. Reynold's great great grand daughter, Miss Mary LeMoine Potter.

<sup>15</sup>“Mr. Robert Potter,” the son of Robert Potter (born 1666) and Elizabeth Wells Potter, was born July 26, 1702, and was the brother-in-law of Col. Elisha Reynolds. He acquired the land by inheritance from his father who had it by purchase from the heirs of Samuel Wilbor on September 22, 1684. He deeded the jail lot to the Governor and Company on September 22, 1752. This lot measured 50 by 45 feet.



of South Kings Town will give a deed of peace of Land comodious for A Goal House & Yard & that their is a great number of people together with y<sup>e</sup> said Co<sup>ll</sup> Rennold has subscribed & many more will subscribe to build a Handsome Court House & Goal . . . . at their own charge & Expence and finish y<sup>e</sup> same compleatly without any other Charg to this Colony than is hereafter Desired & y<sup>t</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Court House shall be Forty five feet Long & Thirty feet deep & preportionable high & well Finished off inside & out . . . . and an honour to y<sup>e</sup> Goverment." In return for this gift it is asked that the Assembly enact the removal to Little Rest and appoint Col. Reynolds, William Potter,<sup>16</sup> and Major Latham Clarke<sup>17</sup> "to be the undertakers & Managers to Colect & take ye subscriptions . . . ." and also "y<sup>t</sup> y<sup>e</sup> honours will grant to ye sad (*sic*) managers y<sup>e</sup> s<sup>d</sup> old Court House & Goal on Tower Hill Exclusive of the Land they stand on to enable them to Cary on y<sup>e</sup> said New Building thereof or to dispose of as they think proper," and further that all sessions of the Assembly and Courts be held in the New Court House at Little Rest.

(*To be concluded*)

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<sup>16</sup>William Potter, son of Col. John Potter and Mercy Robinson Potter, was born January 21, 1722. William Potter lived on the North Road at Little Rest, and was for a considerable period the host of Jemima Wilkinson, "the Universal Friend," of whom he was a devoted disciple, later following her to New York state where he died.

<sup>17</sup>Major Latham Clarke was the son of William Clarke and Hannah Watson Clarke. He was born November 19, 1724, and is supposed to have died in Havana, Cuba, in August, 1724. (*Clarke Families in R. I., G. A. Morrison, Jr., New York, pp. 226-227*). He was Major of the King's County Regiment from 1750 to 1753.

## Othniel Gorton's Two Wives

By HENRY A. BURLINGAME

(Addition to page 303 of *Austin's Genealogical Dictionary*)

Othniel Gorton, born September 22, 1669, died June 13, 1733, married first Marcy Burlingame (daughter of Roger Burlingame and wife Mary), had by her, Israel born                      , John born 1693 and Frances born March 15, 1707. He married secondly, Marcy (granddaughter of Moses and wife Mary (Knowles) Lippitt), had by her, Othniel born October 1, 1718. See said Roger Burlingame's will, November 28, 1715, Book II, page 49, Providence Records, and Mary Lippitt's will, March 6, 1718/19, Book I, page 154, Warwick Records. Also Book I, page 88 for births.

Moses Lippitt married Mary Knowles, November 19, 1668, Book I, page 2, Warwick Records, and they could not have a granddaughter old enough to marry Othniel in 1690, about the date of Israel's birth or John's birth in 1693, therefore the granddaughter of Mary Lippitt shows Othniel's 2nd marriage. An abstract of Mary Lippitt's will appears on page 338 of *Austin's Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island*.

## The Block Island "Double Ender."\*

ADDITIONAL NOTES BY GEORGE R. BURGESS.

Through the courtesy of Mr. Lovell Dickens, Mr. George A. Mitchell and Mr. Parker Mitchell, all of Block Island, I was able this past summer to record the names of some of the old Block Island "double-enders."

The list is as follows: *Thomas Lynch* (largest and probably most famous, built in Newport), *Island Belle* (second largest), *Dreadnaught* (large class), *Sapho* (large class), *Lena M.* (large class), *Ark*, *Telegraph*, *Diana's Delight* (bought by D. B. Dodge, renamed *Snowy Daisy*), *Wedge*, *Rose an' Ball*, *Morning Star*, *Rhode Island*, *Active* (large class), *Glory Ann*, (story

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\*An illustrated account of the "double-ender" appeared in the October, 1923, issue of the *Collections*.

of, written and published in magazine a few years ago, picture in R. I. H. S. C. Oct., 1923), *Light Foot*, *Flying Cloud*, *Bee*, *Wabash*, *Connecticut* (built in Connecticut), *Oregon*, *Vanderbilt*, *Annie Steel* (built by Andrew Dodge in 1879, had steel masts), *Dauntless*, *Cunchi* (built in 1877), *Turtle*, *President*, *Four Brothers* (possibly two, one built in Newport and one in Block Island), *Luo* (built by Deacon Mitchell), *Emma* (now doing duty — sawn in two — as roof of two chicken houses), *Splendor*, *Ladies' Delight* (possibly this is same as *Diana's Delight*), *Owl* and *Hector*.

A painting of the *Island Belle* was reproduced in *The Rudder* of April, 1912.

The *Lena M.*, one of the last in commission as a fishing boat, was purchased in 1910 by Martin C. Erismann, a naval architect, who sailed her to Marblehead. Upon being hauled out, it was found impracticable to repair her. He took off all of the measurements, and from them produced the *Roaring Bessie* and used her as a pleasure boat.

California heard of the *Roaring Bessie*, and B. C. Huber ordered his *Pacific Child* laid down and built in 1924, following almost exactly the lines of the *Lena M.* He says: "Perhaps it is interesting to know that the owner picked the old Block Island model not only because the old model was sound according to modern naval architecture, but because in the beautiful lines of the hull and the Greek simplicity of the rig the old builders and boatmen of Block Island attained the most pleasing form it has yet been his pleasure to see afloat."

I have been unable to trace the building of these double-enders farther back than around the Revolution. John Rose was building them a little later than this. Unfortunately I have mislaid my data giving dates, but he was the grandfather of the present John Rose, hardware dealer, and others now living on Block Island. This John Rose was followed by his son Caleb; his son Robert, who is still living, also worked on them. In the latter days, Deacon Mitchell and John Thomas were boat builders.

In 1886 there were owned on the Island around sixty double-



enders, twelve years after the East Harbor was constructed. In 1914 there were three or four still in the water in the East Harbor.

In July, 1776, "a mustee lad" who was a prisoner on the *Cerberus* jumped overboard and swam three miles to Block Island, where he found "a cedar boat with two sails," of which he promptly took possession and sailed to Brenton's Point. This boat was probably a double-ender, as they could be handled by one man.

## Notes

The following persons have been elected to membership in the Society:

Mr. William O. Dyer  
Mrs. Arthur B. Lisle  
Mr. James R. MacColl  
Dr. Henry S. Mathewson  
Mrs. Whitney Smith  
Mrs. Gardner T. Swarts

The Society has been fortunate in obtaining a complete file of *Bangs Trumpet*, a newspaper issued in Providence in 1857, and in obtaining a file consisting of all the known copies of the *Gazette Française*, which was printed at Newport in 1780 and 1781 on the printing press of the French fleet.

Hon. Frederick B. Cole has presented to the Society a type-written compilation of items relating to North Kingstown in the Revolutionary War.

Among the new books of Rhode Island interest are:

*Steamboat Days*, by Fred E. Dayton, which has a chapter on steamboating on Narragansett Bay.

*Rhode Island Ferries*, by Anna A. and Charles V. Chapin.

*Traditions of Medicine in Rhode Island*, by John W. Keefe, M.D., F. A. C. S., containing brief biographies of early Rhode Island physicians.

*Looking Backward Four Score Years*, by Frank C. Angell, of Centredale, R. I.

*The Story of a Sub-Pioneer*, by Sara M. Algeo.

*Credo*, by Mrs. Anne C. E. Allinson.

*A Plea for a Spiritual Philosophy*, by the late Courtney Langdon.

The October Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society contains a paper on *Some Old Buildings in Newport*, by Miss Mary E. Powel.

*The Bibliography of Rhode Island Newspapers, 1732-1820*, by Clarence S. Brigham is printed in the recently issued *American Antiquarian Society's Proceedings*, for April, 1924.

Mr. R. C. Ballard Thruston of Louisville, Ky., the foremost authority on flags in America, has sent to the Society the following note which supplements the article on flags that we published in the last issue of the Collections.

"There was an English work of which there were said to be only three or four copies in the United States. It is entitled 'The Standards and Colours of the Army from the Restoration 1661 to the Introduction of the Territorial System 1881,' by Samuel Milne Milne, Leeds: Printed for the Subscribers by Godall and Suddick, 1893. While this is claimed to have some errors, it shows that in the earlier days each regiment not only had its regimental colors but each company had its company color; the colors being furnished by the Colonels or officers of the regiment until 1743 when the Crown took over that matter. In those early days changes did not take place with the lightning rapidity with which they do today. I am therefore strongly inclined to think that where colors existed in our Revolutionary days, they might have belonged to the regiment, a battalion or a company. Moreover in Colonial and Revolutionary days, and subsequent thereto, there were many local companies, each of which had or desired to have its own color.

"From my study of the subject, I think that practically each company adopted a design for an arms or seal, and that design was placed at some point on the obverse side of the colors, the arms or seal of the colony or state being placed on the reverse. That state of affairs is shown by certain of your illustrations.

"My study of the subject also shows me that there were three methods to attach these colors to the pike. One was by tacking

along the hoist; the second by having ribbons sewn to the hoist of the flag at regular intervals and the flag was attached to the pike by means of tying these ribbons. The third method was having a bit of cloth sometimes an extension of the field of the flag made long enough to wrap around the pike as described by you—this I find was often sewed making a cylinder through which the pike was run. In that case I am inclined to think that the portion wrapped around the pike was not considered a part of the color in measurement.”

Mr. R. C. Ballard Thruston refers to the Sullivan Expedition flag as “one of the most interesting flags in the country.” He explains its curious designs as follows:

“Apparently the makers had an abundance of white, but were short of red material. Therefore, only four of the thirteen stripes were red, and the white were arranged one at the top and the other eight in pairs. The canton had a coiled rattlesnake.”

## Rhode Island Signboards

BY HOWARD M. CHAPIN.\*

In 1922 the Society held a loan exhibition of old signboards which created a great deal of interest. Photographs were taken of all of the signboards in the exhibition and illustrations of the Rhode Island signs are included in this issue of the *Collections*.

The signboard had reached a high state of development in the Old World as a necessary and time-honored institution, when it was transported in toto, design, form, and use, to the growing colonies of the New World. Social customs are most retentive, and America absorbed the signboard as a natural phase of its daily life without making any marked modification in its appearance or use. As the original purpose of the signboard was to inform the unlettered, its use in seventeenth century New England was practically as important as in England, and the use of the signboard gradually died out as education increased. The wooden Indian of the tobacco shop, one of the

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\*Mr. Charles A. Calder very kindly contributed his notes on early Rhode Island signboards.



few distinctively American signs, held its own almost to the end, while the striped barber's pole and the three balls of the pawn shop came through with flying colors. The signboard, as everyone knows, reached its lowest ebb at the beginning of the twentieth century, and has now taken a new lease of life for three quite different causes; first as the symbol of nationwide institutions as the bell for the telephone system, then secondly on account of the "historical revival," as the modern interest in antiques might be called, and lastly as a means of quickly communicating information to those rushing along in automobiles.

Signboards fall into three general classes: trade signs, the purpose of which is to call attention to the particular trade that its owner follows; tavern and shop signs that are, like trade-marks, distinctive of the particular house regardless of what its business may be; and toll signs which give the rates and charges. The earliest signs in New England were in general tavern signs, these being followed by trade signs as the towns grew larger and their business centers became more complex and confusing. Finally, with the construction of roads and bridges, toll signs followed as a natural corollary.

The earliest sign displayed at the recent loan exhibition at the Rhode Island Historical Society was the trade sign of a Providence shoe-shop, the sign bearing the date 1718. Various types of "Butes and Shous" are shown in black and red upon a white background. The reverse of the sign is similar in design, the whole being about twenty inches square. This sign is particularly interesting because it does not seem to have been retouched in modern times, the J form of the ones and of the seven, and the scroll work being characteristic of the period. It belongs to the first type of signs, the sort that we have described as trade signs.

The earliest class of signs used in New England was the tavern sign. Each tavern was known by its distinctive sign, and its reputation for service and for cheer was easily associated in the traveller's mind with the emblem or device of the particular hostelry. One of the earliest, if not indeed perhaps the earliest, of Boston signboards was that which displayed the *King's Arms* and hung before the inn or ordinary that was kept by Hugh Gunnison as early as 1642. It is said that the name of this tavern

was changed to the *State's Arms* during the Protectorate as a matter of political and economic expediency.

A sign bearing the popular English device of a *Rose and Crown* and the date 1725 is preserved by the Attleboro Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. This sign formerly hung at the Daggett Tavern, an historic building which is still standing in Slater Park, Pawtucket, R. I. The sign has interesting ornamental iron-work, but one side of the sign has been re-touched, which is a great pity, for both the details of the design and the coloring have suffered grievously.

Larwood and Hotten, the great authorities on English signboards, have developed a classification which perhaps cannot be greatly improved. It will be interesting to list our American signboard devices in similar groups, which the reader can then compare in diversity and number with those of England. Many interesting colonial signs still remain unrecorded, and it will be the work of years before the American list can pretend to rival that of the mother country.

The historical or commemorative group of signboard designs gave in later years a chance for America to develop some distinctively American designs. Some one once said, perhaps slightly, that the Greeks honored their great men by erecting statues to them, that the Romans rewarded them with triumphal entries and ovations, and that the English hung their portraits in the streets to serve as signs for public houses. Many of the early Boston taverns followed this popular national trend with such names and signs (for the sign was almost an integral part of the tavern) as the *King's Head*, 1691, the *Queen's Head*, 1732, *George* or *St. George*, 1721, *Cromwell's Head*, 1760, *Admiral Vernon's Head*, 1743, *Shakespeare* and *General Wolfe*, 1768. As time went on the word "head" gradually came to be omitted, and by the late eighteenth century the word "head" is rarely found as part of a tavern's name. It is related that the sign of *Cromwell's Head* was hung so low that all who passed under it had to make a necessary reverence, and that *Vernon's Head* was particularly popular because of his nickname of "Old Grog." Almost everyone of the old signboards unlocks a flood of tradi-

tion and fact, which would make interesting reading, but would lead us far afield from the subject of our study.

The *King's Head* was of course a popular sign, and was found throughout the colonies. At Newport we find not only a *King's Head*, 1767, but a *Queen's Head*, 1765, and also the sign of the *Queen*, 1750 to 1770. A *General Wolfe* sign was hanging at Brooklyn, Conn., in 1773 before the Tavern owned by Israel Putnam, and also at a Newburyport Tavern. This latter sign braved even the anti-English feeling of the Revolutionary days. At Providence the sign of *General Montgomery* ornamented an inn at the North End of the town in 1784, and the sign of *General Amherst* marked a stable at Newport in 1765. The head of the popular *Pitt* adorned many tavern signs in the New World. It hung at Newport in 1759, at York, Maine, at Lancaster, Penna., with the date 1808, and at Portsmouth, N. H., it replaced the head of the hated *Earl of Halifax* during the stirring days of 1775. The *Marquis of Rockingham* was another Portsmouth sign, and in 1769 the *Marquis of Granby's* head invited guests to an inn at Newport, R. I. There was also a sign of *John Wilkes* at Newport in 1771, and the *King of Prussia*, in remembrance of his service as an ally in the French Wars, was still on a tavern there in 1766. *Shakespeare* was also popular, and advertised a coffee house at Boston, while at Providence *Shakespeare's Head* was for years the well known sign of the town's leading printing house. With the coming of the Revolution, American heroes replaced the former English notables, and signboards bearing portraits of *Washington*, *Franklin* and *Lafayette* were scattered galore throughout the colonies. These portraits varied greatly in motive, coloring and technique. There were *Washington* Taverns, *Washington* Coffee Houses and later *Washington* Hotels. A statue of *Franklin* still stands at the Franklin Building, Providence, a bust of *Hamilton* stood on the Hamilton Building, and of *Wayland* on the Wayland Building. Boston honored *John Hancock* by placing his portrait on a signboard, and the portrait of *William Warren*, the actor, as *Falstaff*, hung for many years at the New Theatre Hotel in Philadelphia. 1882. The Anawan House, Rehoboth, Mass., 1836, commemorated the famous Indian chieftain *Anawan*, of King Philip's





Gardiner Tavern, Exeter, R. I.  
*Loaned by Mr. Russell Grinnell.*



Mowry Tavern, Lime Rock, R. I.  
*Loaned by Col. Samuel M. Nicholson.*

War fame, with a signboard picture representing Anawan on horseback in an altogether too modern style. Tobacco was sold at the sign of *Tecumseh* at Providence in 1821. Was this a forerunner of the wooden Indian of the tobacco shop? The Vernon Stiles Inn at Thompson, Conn., on an unusually large signboard, shows *Lafayette*, seated behind a span of horses in the act of raising his hat in salutation. On the reverse the faces were not finished, but were left blank, without very much detriment to the general effect of the sign. The commemoration of the Marquis' visit, as well as the signs of *Hancock*, *Anawan*, *Franklin* and *Washington* have the flavor of American history and should certainly be classed as new world modifications of signboard devices. Few classical celebrities were honored with signs in New England, although the *Head of Hippocrates* hung in colonial Salem, and *Neptune*, in his chariot surrounded by Triton, appeared on a Philadelphia signboard. The reverse contained a marine view, and the complexity of the designs marks the sign as of the decadent period, for signboards as well as heraldry turned from simplicity to "picturesque bits" in their flamboyant decline.

The second group of signs consists of those bearing an heraldic or emblematic device. The *crown* is one of the earliest of these signs and is found in London as early as 1467. Although unmentioned, it always appears on the *King's Head* and on the *Queen's Head* in signs bearing such representations. It is also often found standing by itself as a sign of the *Crown* tavern Boston, 1745, or the *Crown* coffee house, Boston, 1718, Newport, 1777, and elsewhere, scattered throughout the colonies during the pre-Revolutionary period. The crown is also very popular in combinations such as the *Rose and Crown* of 1725 already mentioned. There was another *Rose and Crown* at Boston in 1728, and other colonial combinations were the *Hat and Crown*, Newport, 1764, the *Crown and Beehive* and the *Crown and Razor*, the two latter swinging at Boston. The sign of the *Three Crowns* hung at Lancaster, Pa., in 1771.

The royal arms, usually under the name of the *King's Arms*, as at Boston in 1651 and later at Salem, fall into this group. The *King's Arms* hung before a coffee house at Newport in 1767,

and in 1766 a sign at Saybrook bore the *King's Arms* on one side and a ship on the other. Of the trade-guild arms we find that both Boston and Newport boasted a *Freemason's Arms* and a *Baker's Arms*, and that the *Painter's Arms* hung before a Providence paint shop in 1769. There was a *De Lancey Arms* Tavern in New York in 1763.

Samuel Adams Drake, Boston's great historian, aptly wrote: "The Revolution wrought swift and significant change in many of the old, favorite signboards." He notes that "down came the King's arms and up went the people's arms" and that "the crowns and sceptres, the lions and unicorns furnished fuel for patriotic bonfires, or were painted out forever." He continues "The crown was knocked into a cocked hat, the sceptre fell at the unsheathing of the sword. The heads of Washington and Hancock, Putnam and Lee, Jones and Hopkins, now fired the martial heart instead of Vernon, Hawk and Wolfe." The Newport Mercury of August 19, 1776, contains the following comment: "Within a few days past, the sign of the *British Union Jack*, which had been a tavern sign at a house in this town, near half a century, was taken down and on Friday last the sign of the *Flag of the Thirteen United States of America* was put up in the place thereof, by the patriotic owner of the house, who certainly deserves every reasonable encouragement of his countrymen." The *Arms of the United States*, the spread eagle with national shield, of course became immensely popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The national arms appear on the signboard of H. Pray's Inn, of Angell's Center Hotel, at Centredale, R. I.; of Witter's Inn in Connecticut in 1829, of the Tavern of Northfield Farms and of many other inns. At the Spicer Tavern at Hopkinton City, R. I., the *Eagle and Arms* are surrounded by twelve stars, instead of thirteen, and a great variation is of course noticeable in the arrangement and coloring on the different signboards. In many cases the *Eagle and Arms* appear on only one side of the board and the other side is decorated with a different design, as at Newton, N. H., where the reverse originally bore a *Punch bowl*, and at Coventry where it bore a *Yoke of oxen*. The Bissell Tavern at East Windsor, Ct., had an *American eagle* on one side and *Thirteen interlacing rings*



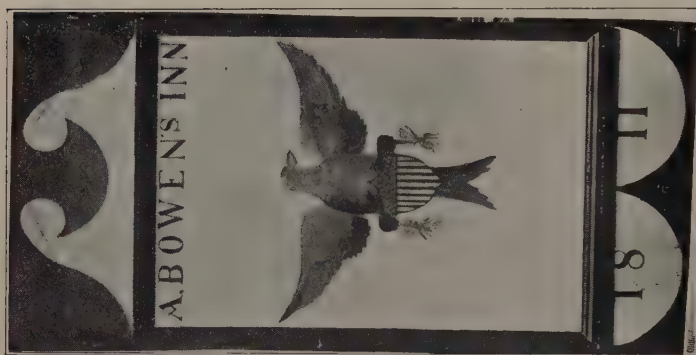
on the other, each ring encircling a tree or plant peculiar to the state it designated. Within the large circle was a portrait of Washington. This motive with much variation in detail was very popular during and immediately after the Revolution. Later this design was replaced by the *Head of the Goddess of Liberty*. The *American eagle* holding the *Arms of Connecticut* appears on the tavern sign of Daniel Loomis.

Heraldic charges such as the cross, the lion, the unicorn, etc., served as signboard devices in America as they did in England. Boston had its *Cross Tavern*, 1732, its *Red Cross*, 1746, and its *Great Cross*. The *Red Lion*, Boston, 1654, the *Red Lion*, Philadelphia, and the *Golden Lion*, Newport, 1773, were heraldic lions, although natural lions also are found on signboards. The *Golden Lion* at Philadelphia, an heraldic charge symbolic of Great Britain, was changed into a *yellow cat* on account of the unpopularity of the lion in America during the Revolution. Other heraldic devices in use were the *Three Horseshoes*, Boston, 1774, the "*Flower de Luce*," Boston, 1675, the *Unicorn*, Newport, 1773, and the *Green Dragon*, Boston, which tavern Daniel Webster styled "the Headquarters of the Revolution."

It is of course very difficult to draw the line between the heraldic animals of the second group and the real animals and mythological monsters of the third group. The *Lion* at Boston in 1789 may have been an heraldic charge, but as the lion has always been a popular beast the one appearing so soon after the Revolution would seem more likely to have symbolized the King of Beasts rather than the British lion. It is easy enough to distinguish between the two lions, if the sign is extant, for the heraldic lion is a peculiar symbolic creation quite unlike a real lion, and the British lion is of course crowned. The *Lion* on the signboard at Amherst was certainly not heraldic. The sign of the *Lion* hung before a tobacco store in Providence in 1763, a *Lion and Mortar* at Salem years earlier, and there was a *Bunch of Grapes and Lion* at Providence in 1766 over Edward Thurber's store. After the dissolution of the firm of Thurber and Cahoone, Edward Thurber carried on his business at the sign of the *Brazen Lion* in 1768. Various heraldic lions have already been mentioned, as has Philadelphia's famous *Yellow Cat*.



Asaph Bowen Tavern, Hartford Stage Line, Coventry, R. I.  
*Loaned by Mr. Ulysses G. Bowen.*



Asaph Bowen Tavern, Hartford Stage Line, Coventry, R. I.  
*Loaned by Mr. Ulysses G. Bowen.*

The dog family was represented by the sign of the *Dog and Pot* at Boston in 1722, doubtless a copy of the famous old London sign, by the *Greyhound* Tavern at Roxbury and by the sign of the *Greyhound* at Providence in 1772. The appearance of the Providence *Greyhound* sign is preserved by a woodcut in a contemporary newspaper and reminds one of the huge wooden cat that until recently stood in lower New York. There was a *Fox* at Jaffrey, N. H., in 1802 and a *Golden Fox* at Providence in 1768.

A great many signs bore the horse both by itself and also in combinations. We find the *Black Horse* at Boston in 1698, at Newport in 1766, and at New York, and there was a very curious *Black Horse* sign dated 1762 in the exhibition of 1922. Jonathan Nichols kept the *White Horse* at Newport in 1759, and later a *White Horse* hung before a tavern and a general store, and the *White Horse* sign is found at Providence in 1803, at Boston and at many other places. The *Horse* by itself appeared on the sign of the Pembroke Tavern and the Dewey Tavern, 1776. The signboard of the Grosvenor Inn at Pomfret bears a horse and the date 1765 on one side and on the other a soldier on horseback carrying the Continental or Grand Union flag of 1776. This sign was retouched some years ago by Mr. Hoppin of Providence. In combination the *Horse and Eagle*, Newport, 1774, is unusual, not being mentioned in the English list. The *Man and Horse*, Providence, 1798, is doubtless a variant description of the *Horse and Groom*, a common English device appropriate for taverns, which appears on the signboard of Mowry's Inn, Smithfield, R. I., a signboard that is still extant, and on the signs that formerly hung at Brattleboro, Vt., and at Prescott, Mass. This latter sign had on the reverse a *Horse and Rider*. The *Coach and Horses* sign was used at Philadelphia, at Centrebrook, Ct., and elsewhere, and a *Stable and Horses* at Providence in 1784. The unusual sign of a *Horse, Rider and Hounds* hung at Hopkinton, N. H., in 1786.

The *Unicorn* was considered as especially appropriate for chemists and goldsmiths, and diverse romantic tales and legends are related in connection with this mythological beast. It is believed by many that the unicorn is merely the outgrowth of





Center Hotel, Centredale, R. I.  
*Loaned by Mr. George C. Dempsey.*



Pray's Tavern, North Providence, R. I.  
*Loaned by Pawtucket Chapter, D. A. R.*

the distorted account of the rhinoceros, as described by returning sailors. In later years sailors often exhibited the tusk or horn of the narwhal as evidence that they had seen and killed a unicorn. The *Unicorn and Mortar* appropriately hung before an apothecary's shop at Providence, and there was a *Unicorn* at Newport in 1773. This latter unicorn may however have been heraldic.

Of the bovine animals we note the *Bull* at Boston in 1833, a *Bull's Head* at Lancaster, Pa., and a *Yoke of Oxen* at Coventry, R. I., in 1811. The lamb had long been a popular sign in England, so it is not surprising to find the sign of the *Lamb* at Boston as early as 1746, and later a *White Lamb* at Providence. Perchance the reason the *Lamb* is not found earlier in New England is because it might be thought to savor of idolatry. Both a *Buck*, 1772, and a *Roe-buck*, 1768, and also a *Buck and Breeches*, 1774, swung on signs at Newport, and a *Reindeer couchant* and an *Elephant*, 1760, were in use at Providence. Groceries were sold at the sign of the *Gilded Rhinoceros* at Providence, an animal that seems to have escaped English signboards. There was a *White Bear* at Newport in 1749, a *Great White Bear* at Providence in the nineteenth century, a *Rabbit and Two Pine Trees* at Northfield and a *Hat and Beaver* at Boston.

Human figures occasionally appeared on sign-boards as the *Boy and Book*, 1762, the *Black Boy*, 1764, and the *Giant and Midget*, all at Providence and of necessity human figures appear in composition pictures. A *man seated at table with wine glass* was on the reverse of the sign at Centrebrook, Ct., and there was a *Golden Head* at Newport in 1771 and a *Brasen Head* at Cornhill, Boston, in 1760.

The bird group, though extensive in number, is rather limited in subject. Chief of the signboard birds is of course the eagle, some heraldic American eagles having already been mentioned in connection with the second group of devices. The *eagle* on the Pawtuxet, R. I., tavern sign is not an heraldic specimen, but rather a bird emblem. This signboard originally bore the innkeeper's name, S. Carpenter, and the date, 1825. It was later repainted to read Wm. Hancock 1834,\* and later a board with

the name W. Carder was placed over Hancock's name, thus recording changes in ownership. The famous *Golden Eagles* of Newport, like the Horses of St. Marks, have had an eventful history. Originally they are said to have been companion pieces and to have graced the gate-posts of Metcalf Bowler's elaborate country estate in Portsmouth, R. I. The panelling from one room in his house is now in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. After the sale of the Bowler property, these eagles were carried to Newport. One of them is considered by some to have been the *Golden Eagle* that served as the well known sign of John Bours' shop. It is sometimes called the *Golden Eagle*, 1763, and sometimes is merely referred to as the *Eagle*. One of the eagles was later placed over George Eng's store on Thames Street, and the other on top of Townsend's Coffee house, where it appears in an old engraving of about 1840. This eagle was twice blown down from its perch. Today the two eagles, full relief carvings, not pictures, stand facing each other, one on each side of Thames Street. One of the eagles has suffered considerable restoration, the head and feather-carving clearing dating from a late period.

The *Golden Eagle*, Providence, 1809, perhaps the same as the *Spread Eagle*, 1799, the *Horse and Eagle*, Newport, 1777, all Tavern signs, the *American Eagle*, a Providence printer's sign, 1816, the *Eagle*, Boston, and the *Rising Eagle*, Malden, 1766, give proof of the regard in which this bird was held. In Pennsylvania, a curious signboard bore a *Hen with Chickens* above which hovered an *Eagle with a Crown* in its beak, and the inscription read, "May the Wings of Liberty cover the Chickens of Freedom and pluck the Crown from the Enemy's Head." The spirit of the Revolution is evident in this sign.

A few other birds appear on signboards as the *Swan* at Boston, 1708, the *Dove* at Boston, the *Purblind Owl*, and the *Crow and Sausage* both at Providence. The *Three Cranes* at Charlestown, and the bird on a Philadelphia sign will be mentioned later in connection with humorous signboards.

(To be concluded)





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